

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Mike Onaga, 69, lei seller and retired carpenter

"I remember in my young days, you won't believe it, but way back before the war, I even wen drive taxi. And I used to take customers from Kalihi to Downtown and I stopped at Maunakea Street, pick up a lei, twenty cents one double carnation at that time."

Mike Onaga, Okinawan, was born in 1916 in Kāne'ohe, O'ahu. His parents, Nabe Kameya and Kama Onaga, immigrated to Hawai'i from Okinawa. Shortly after his birth the family moved to Waikīkī where they operated a piggery. When the Ala Wai Canal was dredged in the 1920s, the Onagas relocated to Watertown at Pu'u'loa where they continued to farm.

Onaga began his elementary education at Ka'ahumanu, then continued at Watertown. He attended Kalākaua Intermediate and McKinley High, but did not graduate.

Onaga worked at 'Aiea Sugar Plantation for a few years beginning in 1936. He then worked at Hickam Air Force Base as a laborer. After serving in the army during World War II, Onaga began his twenty-year stint as a Pearl Harbor Shipyard carpenter.

When Hickam Field was built, the Onagas moved out of Watertown to Damon Tract, where Onaga met Dorothy Andrade. They were married in 1945. Shortly thereafter, she began selling flower leis at Downtown and Waikīkī nightclubs. Eventually, Dorothy and Mike Onaga established a permanent stand on Lagoon Drive near the airport. Dorothy's Lei Stand is still part of the airport lei stands.

Although Onaga had his own career, he worked at the lei stand in his free time. He and his son operate the stand today. Now a resident of Foster Village, Onaga enjoys fishing.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mike Onaga (MO)

September 17, 1985

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: 'Iwalani Hodges (IH)

IH: This is an interview with Mike Onaga at his home in Foster Village, Honolulu, Hawai'i, on September 17, 1985. Interviewer is 'Iwalani Hodges.

Okay, Mr. Onaga, can we start out by talking about your parents?

MO: My father and my mom?

IH: Uh huh [yes].

MO: Well, they were. . . . In other words, my father came to Hawai'i as a, you know, labor, plantation.

IH: Where did he come from?

MO: Okinawa.

IH: Do you know about when he came?

MO: That, I don't. And my mom was a picture bride, those days.

IH: A picture bride?

MO: Yeah, you know. And when she come in, all set. So, I don't, what time, what year they come or, you know. . . .

IH: Do you know any details about the marriage situation, the way it was set up, or anything like that?

MO: That, too, I don't.

IH: But your father came here to work on the plantation?

MO: Plantation, right.

IH: The sugar plantation?

MO: Uh huh [yes], I think so.

IH: Do you know about how long he worked on the plantation?

MO: Gee, that, too, I don't know. But when he start and when he went into pig farming, that, I can't say. The pig farming was something like in 1935, '34 (1920s).

IH: When were you born?

MO: Nineteen sixteen.

IH: Nineteen sixteen? And where were you living at the time?

MO: That time I was born in Kāne'ohe.

IH: Your father was still working on the sugar plantation?

MO: No. Then, he was making his own tōfu and selling.

IH: Oh, did he have a store or something?

MO: They make their tōfu early in the morning, and they take it out in the mornings, selling 'em out to customers.

IH: Did he sell on a truck or something?

MO: Those days, I think they walked. Wagon, eh? I can remember piggery, too, used to be wagon--horse and wagon, you know.

IH: And then, how long did you live in Kāne'ohe?

MO: That, I don't know, but I know I was something like maybe not even first grade, maybe two years before first grade, so be around four [1920], yeah?

IH: About four years old?

MO: Four, yeah. Then went to piggery. That's in Waikīkī.

IH: Then you folks opened the piggery?

MO: They raised pigs.

IH: Whereabouts in Waikīkī?

MO: That's now [where] Ala Moana Hotel is.

IH: Oh, right there? Were there a lot of piggeries in that area?

MO: Yeah, quite a few farmers there.

IH: Was that a swampy area?

M0: It was swampy, so they had fish. They had everything: duck, chicken. I remember the vegetable farm we had.

IH: Oh, how big was your property?

M0: That didn't belong; we used to lease the property from Dillingham Estate. And just about three acres.

IH: Oh, that's plenty . . .

M0: Yeah, those days, was big.

IH: Do you remember any of the other farmers in the area?

M0: Yes, quite a few. Far apart.

IH: Do you remember any of their names?

M0: I remember the Gotos.

IH: Gotos?

M0: Yeah, they used to be neighbor.

IH: They had a farm similar to yours?

M0: Yeah, similar.

IH: Where did you folks sell the pigs?

M0: The Chinese used to come and buy the whole lot at a time. Once a month, they used to come. And price, you know, you like the price, you sell.

IH: So, how many pigs did you have at one time?

M0: Usually, nine or ten. Yeah, maybe nine or ten (to a pen). And they keep it (the pens, about fourteen of them) in lines.

IH: What about the ducks?

M0: Ducks was home use, chicken was home use. And the vegetable farm, too, yeah? So, what you used to live on is what we grow. We seldom eat pork. But if we do, in those days there were no ice box, so when they kill a pig, all that pork go into a barrel of salt. A wooden barrel with all that Hawaiian salt, you know. That's how you keep it. That was those days, yeah?

IH: Oh, terrific. Did it ever flood, that area?

M0: Yes. It does when big rain.

IH: About how often?

MO: Whenever the big rain come. But that's when we used to run out, look for fish. (Chuckles) Used to have mullet all over the place.

IH: What other kind of fish did you have besides mullet?

MO: Besides mullet, they used to call this pontoon, the fish. I don't know what the real name.

IH: Pontoon?

MO: Yeah. That was good eating, too, but it's a mudfish like, you know. Because it's pond and whatnot. So, when the tide come up, it's close by Ala Moana, so naturally the pond rise, too.

IH: So, did your house have to be up on stilts or something?

MO: Yeah, right. In those days, everything was on posts, you know. High, in other words. Underneath the house, nothing but maybe storage area. You know, you store all kind of things underneath.

IH: How many bedrooms did you have there?

MO: Oh, I don't know. You can say maybe two.

IH: Was a small house?

MO: Yeah. Those days, no bed, you know.

IH: No bed?

MO: No bed.

IH: Sleep on the floor?

MO: Floor. Just (chuckles) like in Japan, eh? That's something similar.

IH: How many of you were there?

MO: Was about seven in the family.

IH: Seven children?

MO: Yeah. Seven in the family.

IH: And where are you in that seven?

MO: I'm the second.

IH: You're the second? I see. Do you remember any kind of activities you did while living in Waikīkī, with the other neighborhood kids and stuff like that?

MO: Yeah. Run around, play. Whenever the fire engine go down, we used

to chase 'em. You know, pretty far out, but we used to go down the farm. Even go out to the beach, yeah? But we was more restricted from the beach. Those days, the parents, when they see go in the ocean, they think you going get drowned. So we was more restricted.

IH: How long did you live in Waikīkī?

MO: Gee, I think when they start to make the Ala Wai Canal, that's when we had to get out and we was evicted. So we came to Watertown, Pu'uloa, in other words. That's where we raised pigs. So, what year, that, I can't say.

IH: I think that was in the '20s.

MO: Yeah, if you look back in the '20s whenever they made that canal.

IH: Were you already going to school when you were living in Waikīkī?

MO: Yeah, third grade [ca. 1924]. I was up to third grade when I went out.

IH: Up to third grade? What school did you go to?

MO: Ka'ahumanu School. That was a long walk from where I live to there.

IH: And you used to walk to school?

MO: All walk, yeah.

IH: How long did it take you to get there?

MO: Gee, that, too, I cannot (chuckles) say, but . . .

IH: Yeah, was a long walk?

MO: Yeah, long walk but you play around with 'em. You play around when going home, huh?

IH: So, then when you moved to Pu'uloa . . .

MO: The same thing, raising pigs.

IH: You raising pigs over there, too?

MO: Yeah. And we used to go to Watertown for school.

IH: Where was Watertown?

MO: Watertown is today part of Hickam Field. Part of Hickam Field, close to the channel--you know navy channel? Right there, someplace. (The channel is part of Pearl Harbor. It was dredged in 1939 to allow the big ships to come in. The coral that they dredged out was used to level what was then Fort Kamehameha to make Hickam Field.

Watertown was located along the Diamond Head shore of the channel. It was a regular community with school and two stores--the Chinese store and the Miyamasu Store. The two stores moved to Damon Tract after the eviction from Watertown. A lot of us moved to Damon Tract from Watertown.)

IH: So, there was an elementary school there? Watertown Elementary?

MO: Yeah. Right. After I got out the elementary, I went to Kalākaua. I still was living in Pu'uloa. Kalākaua, one, two years, then we moved out of there.

IH: Kalākaua Intermediate?

MO: Mm hmm [yes], I went to Kalākaua Intermediate. Then we moved to Damon Tract. (Damon Tract extended on the ma kai side of Nimitz Highway from Ke'ehi Lagoon to the present site of the main terminal of the airport. It used to be sugar cane fields but they developed the area for housing. The streets all had letter names such as "A," "B," "C" Streets.)

(At Damon Tract we only lease the land. We built our own house. That's how I got the Pearl Harbor job as carpenter. They test you when you go for the job. I passed and they hired me. We built our Waikīkī house, too. They were both pole houses.)

IH: So, about what year was that, you moved to Damon Tract?

MO: That too, I cannot say.

IH: What grade were you in?

MO: In Kalākaua?

IH: When you moved to Damon Tract?

MO: Damon Tract? I already was going Kalākaua.

IH: So maybe about seventh grade or eighth grade?

MO: Mm hmm, yeah. Seventh grade [1928], Kalākaua.

IH: Why did you make the move to Damon Tract?

MO: Because they did the same thing there [at Watertown, as they did in Waikīkī], to build up Hickam Air Force.

IH: Oh, that's when they started building the Hickam Air Field?

MO: They start to build up the area, yeah.

IH: Oh, I see. So you moved to Damon Tract?

MO: Damon Tract. And we just quit pig raising.

IH: Why did you do that?

MO: You cannot raise pigs down there. So we raised chickens down there.

IH: So you raised chickens?

MO: Yeah. Raised chickens and sell eggs.

IH: How big a property did you have in Damon Tract?

MO: At that time when we first went, we had one acre. We could have one acre, quarter acre, or whatever. You know, half acre.

IH: Where did you folks sell the chickens?

MO: Sell the eggs.

IH: Oh, the eggs, yeah. Would you just sell it in the neighborhood?

MO: Go into the plantation camp and sell. I used to do that.

IH: Yeah? Which one?

MO: 'Aiea [Honolulu] Plantation, but in Pu'u'loa, upper side, they had that camp there, see. So, I used to go sell eggs.

IH: Can you kind of describe the neighborhood of Damon Tract? What kind of people lived there?

MO: Well, Japanese neighbors. And lot of those local people, Hawaiian and whatnot. All used to be mostly navy yard workers.

IH: Navy yard workers?

MO: Yeah. Majority of them. It's close by to navy [Pearl Harbor]. Navy or the army. I think it was good neighborhood.

IH: When did you start working?

MO: When I can't go to school no more. After I get out of Kalākaua, you know. I think not even six months I went high school. That's when Farrington High School just built, I believe. It wasn't ready for us, yet. That time, yeah. So, you know, those days, money was hard, so we just have to give up, quit, and go work. And I worked for the plantation.

IH: Sugar plantation?

MO: Yeah.

IH: Which one did you work for?

MO: Honolulu Plantation. Gee, I didn't stay there too long until this Hickam Field and the national defense really building up. Then I wen work as a labor first. And then came carpenter helper. Then I end up in being a carpenter.

IH: Oh, that's good. So, was that before the war?

MO: Yes, that was before the war.

IH: Before World War II?

MO: Mm hmm [yes]. And just before World War II, they start to build navy housing. You know this [Pearl Harbor] housing here?

IH: Navy housing?

MO: At first, they used to have Area 1, Area 2, Area 3. I worked right through. That's when the war came. It was '41.

IH: So, you were working in navy housing when the war came?

MO: Navy housing, mm hmm [yes].

IH: Were there a lot of jobs around right before the war?

MO: Yeah. National defense had lot of work.

IH: Did you folks get paid good?

MO: You can say the pay is something like fifty cents an hour.

IH: Was that good for the time?

MO: At that time, yeah. That's plenty money.

IH: So, when the war broke out, did you go in the service?

MO: Not right away. I think it took about a year and a half before I went into the service. Because physically, I'm okay. Only thing, I was only ninety-nine pounds or ninety-eight pounds, and they don't take you. Until they look at your record and see that you're a construction man, then they take you for engineer work.

IH: Oh, so that's what you did?

MO: Yeah.

IH: Engineer work?

MO: Yeah, and naval work. Nothing but buildings and whatnot.

IH: What service were you in?

MO: Army--1399 [Battalion].

IH: The army? And were you stationed here?

MO: Yeah. And stationed here. Stationed in Coconut Island. All, wherever the big construction project was going on.

IH: But just in the Islands?

MO: Yeah.

IH: Oh, lucky then.

MO: Yeah, but those days, not much of a leave, you know. Maybe in Schofield [Barracks], you over there for three months, no leave. Yeah, no leave to speak. Seven days, sometimes you have to work long hours right through.

IH: Yeah, wartime, that's why.

MO: Wartime.

IH: How long did you stay in the service?

MO: Two and a half years. Soon as the war got over, '45, '46 I got out.

IH: Then what did you do after that?

MO: I worked for the navy.

IH: You worked for the navy? Doing what?

MO: Carpentry work.

IH: Oh. Was that navy housing again?

MO: Maintenance. Maintenance down there. But mostly I was in the mill, where you make windows, doors, louvers, or countersink, everything. All for in the housing.

IH: Okay, and then, was it about that time that you got married, also?

MO: I got married in the army.

IH: Were you still in the army?

MO: When I was in uniform, yeah. I got married in uniform. But she was right--you know, neighbor, eh?

IH: In Damon Tract?

MO: In Damon Tract, mm hmm [yes].

IH: And what was her name?

MO: Dorothy.

IH: Dorothy. And then, her maiden name?

MO: Her maiden name was Andrade.

IH: Did you folks have children?

MO: Yeah.

IH: How many children?

MO: First girl, adopt. Because we have it for long time. And then, the boy came around. He's thirty years old now.

IH: He's thirty years old now? Oh, boy, so he was born 1955?

MO: Yeah, something like that, I don't know. The girl was nine years old when we adopt.

IH: So, what did your wife do?

MO: When we first got married, I mean, nothing. But when I got out of the army, then she start to go selling leis at the nightclub. They used to have a . . .

IH: Was that the first time she ever sold leis?

MO: Yeah, yeah, first time. That was in La Hula Rhumba, and then Blue Lei on Kalākaua Avenue.

IH: Blue Lei was located on Kalākaua?

MO: Kalākaua, yeah.

IH: And that was a nightclub?

MO: Nightclub, right. And then, we live Damon Tract. I believe that airport lei stand first opened something in maybe ending of '46. I know it was something . . .

IH: When she went to Lagoon Drive . . .

MO: No, she didn't go then. We went around '47.

IH: Oh, but the first ones went in '46?

MO: First one was around there.

IH: And who were those first ones on Lagoon Drive?

MO: That was the family of the Serrao and the Ventura. They was the first. That's two sisters [Hattie Serrao, Sophia Ventura] and a brother [Gus Kalili]. They was the first one. So, it didn't take long for we to look at it, and we just went slide in. First thing you know, everybody start to come in slowly.

IH: Did you have trouble getting a space over there?

MO: At first, yes. Because family control, they don't want nobody because of competition, huh? When we slide in there. Then as time goes, we got along okay. Sometime you run out of lei, we got to see, maybe the Ventura house. Have some fun there. Used to be good. Even at first (chuckles), we used to have bad time, but turn out all right.

IH: Did the Venturas live near there?

MO: Ventura used to be Damon Tract, but then they went up to Nu'uanu. They live in Nu'uanu. That's a big family, too. They always a big family. I can remember all those, you know like the girls and the boys. Going school and coming to the lei stand in the afternoon. So, just imagine, all. Like Harriet, she used to go to school, come down, help the mom.

IH: Harriet Kauwe?

MO: Yeah.

IH: What was her mother's name?

MO: (MO mishears question). Nabe Onaga. Oh, you're talking about . . .

IH: No, her mother.

MO: Oh, her mother. Harriet, too. Hattie, they used to call her. Hattie [Serrao].

IH: So, if we can go back a little bit. I wanted to ask you about when your wife started selling leis down at the nightclub. Okay, you said Blue Lei was on Kalākaua [Avenue]. Where was La Hula Rhumba?

MO: La Hula Rhumba used to be on where Board of Water Works is someplace up the hill. Used to go up.

IH: Downtown?

MO: Downtown, right. The uncle, Ray Andrade, used to own that. Then what he did, I don't know, he sold that, and he wen open up a new one in Kalākaua [Avenue at Kapi'olani Boulevard]. Blue Lei was something like where Lippy Espinda used to be, the garage like. That's where the nightclub used to be.

IH: So, her customers were the customers of the nightclub?

MO: Customers that goes into the bar. You know, usually, if they take their wife or girlfriend, whatever, they buy a lei for them. Those days . . .

IH: In those days, they wore a lot of leis?

MO: No, you don't sell that many leis. Because you're restricted to only nightclub. And yet, when we come to the airport, we didn't have too much leis, too. There's a small icebox with few amount of leis and that was it. Because we didn't have no vanda lei. We had mostly carnation. Very little tuberose. Today, the farmers are big. They are really big. At that time, I can say, even vanda growers, hardly anybody. Only in Big Island. Over here, nobody.

IH: When you first started?

MO: Yeah. Hardly anybody over here.

IH: So, your carnations, did you buy carnations?

MO: We used to have the carnation, yeah. They all used to be at Koko Head. All the farmers used to be down there, Koko Head. And today, those farmers that keep on is in Waimānalo.

IH: The same farmers?

MO: Yeah. And they are big. Maybe Koko Head, they was restricted to property. You know, down in Waimānalo, when the plantation close, the state sold the first portion, nine acres per farmer. You had to be qualified. So, I knew a few of them returned to be a farmer. And the tuberose growers, they get 'em by forty acres, fifty acres.

IH: So, what are some of the names of these farmers that are still in business today that were in business at that time . . .

MO: Yes. There's a Harry Nam that used to be in Hawai'i Kai, today he's down in Waimānalo. And then, you can say another one is Kam, Mrs. Kam. The mother used to be the farmer, but then she used to help the mom. But today, she's on her own when she's big. Another one is Yamada. The rest is kinda small. I don't know. I don't see 'em around. Maybe they go take to florist or whatnot. But like Yamada, Kam, they big. When they come with their flower, you can have all what you want.

IH: So, going back to the olden days, you folks bought your carnation. What about your plumeria?

MO: We raise our own. (Chuckles) Pick our own. I used to have quite a bit of trees, about 300 trees, in Damon Tract.

IH: Three hundred? On one acre?

MO: Something like that, yeah. Oh, pretty close to each other. And I

working for the navy, come home, pick up the flowers, string it, take it to the stand, and been doing it for quite a while. Boy, you got, you know. . . . You know, I thought about, today, if I did go and maybe buy land like in 'Aiea they get plumeria farm and all that, I think I be all right. But then, when you work like that, you get tired (chuckles).

IH: So, who helped your wife at the lei stand?

MO: At that time, you don't have too much help. Not like today. At that time, it was very small. So, she used to do it by herself. And then, if she need help, the sister used to help.

IH: But was it a good business?

MO: Not bad. Come home, make \$400, maybe \$500 a month. Not bad.

IH: Oh, that's good at that time.

MO: Yeah, at that time. Today, it's bigger. You get variety of flowers, so you go higher. Today, the income is bigger. Maybe we net, not gross, maybe about \$20,000. Sometimes, when good, \$28,000.

IH: Oh, that's good. Yeah, that's good.

MO: So, you know, you don't have to work hard for it. Only time you work hard is when the business like graduation or really nice occasions. Mother's Day. We look forward to that kind of days. (Chuckles)

IH: Do you enjoy stringing leis?

MO: Yeah, yeah. Due to, you know, after all you get to know lot of people. When they come around they look for you.

IH: So, you have a lot of regular customers?

MO: Yes. Like, you know, we get a charge account, because they're regulars, see. Like Sears Roebuck, we used to know the manager from Sears. All that people, yeah? Sears, Pioneer Federal [Savings]. I mean, you can name Philippine Consulate. You can name plenty. Tori Richard. Tori Richard, yeah, come around with his Mercedes, looking. Then had Mr. Shane that used to own Electric Supply. Oh, there were plenty. You get to know a lot of them. Even the jewelry from Ala Moana [Shopping Center], what is his name? Conrad . . .

IH: Oh, Conrad Jewelers?

MO: Yeah, he used to come around, too. They all, you know. But as times goes, I don't know, they not buying like what it was. More navy or military come out.

IH: Now days?

- MO: Yeah. More military. Every time you look, you going see somebody in uniform. Sometimes they not in uniform, but you know when they are military.
- IH: So, can you describe what your lei stand looked like on Lagoon Drive, the first one?
- MO: First one, it (chuckles) was on a truck. We make a box and just, you know, hang leis inside. There was no lights, so what we used to use is gas lantern. Two gas lanterns at night. Lot of fun, though, those days. Lot of fun. We used to look forward for that MATS [Military Air Transport System] that big seaplane that they used to fly every Thursday.
- IH: Oh, yeah? Every Thursday, a seaplane would come in?
- MO: Used to fly out.
- IH: Oh, go out.
- MO: Come in the morning and go out. When they go out, the navy or the military. You know, they get all military ride that. Even air force or whatever. Transport. They catch the MAT transport. The Mars, that's what they used to call 'em, the Mars.
- IH: The Mars?
- MO: Yeah. Big seaplane. Lot of fun watching that, too.
- IH: So, they would take military people out?
- MO: Yeah, just military. If the family going back home, or you know.
- IH: Oh, so the family would come and buy leis?
- MO: Yeah. Yeah, mm hmm. Even today, too, when the ship go out on training, like they go for six months, sometimes three months, when they come in, the ship coming in tomorrow, today you going see lot of military wives. Navy wives with their children. "What you going to buy for your dad?" And every one have a lei. So, we do quite a bit of business from the military. As a civilian, it's not like what it used to be. It's common, so they don't buy lei like old days. When they have occasion like Mother's Day, bring that, eh? Memorial Day, graduation.
- IH: And that's the local people you're talking about?
- MO: Yeah, the local people. Or otherwise, they string their own plumeria. (Chuckles)
- IH: You have any customers from long time ago that still come to your stand?

MO: Still quite a few. Yeah, they still around. Lot of them, way back, you know. Way back.

IH: About how many cars did you have? How many cars were there at the first stand?

MO: Well, I don't know how many cars, but when we came in and then some other ones start to come in, first thing we get one more dummy in front of us.

IH: One more dummy?

MO: Yeah, dummy car with a lei stand. (Chuckles) So that you have a space. It won't be close to each other. At that time, you can leave your car there, see. At first, we used to come home with our car, but then we just leave it there. Stay there.

IH: Where was it located on Lagoon Drive?

MO: Soon as you enter from, right now, what they call Kam Highway. You enter . . .

IH: Nimitz [Highway]?

MO: Yeah, Nimitz. You enter [onto Lagoon Drive], not even 100 yards, then the stands all the way down.

IH: On the right-hand side?

MO: Yeah, mm hmm. So, quite a few.

IH: Did you have water over there?

MO: No, neighbor.

IH: Use the neighbor's water?

MO: Yeah. We go and get a bucket, neighbor. And even toilet facility, you had to go to the service station.

IH: But you folks had a good time down there?

MO: Oh, yeah. You know, that's how you get to meet all kind of people. And somehow, the [Hawai'i] Aeronautic [Commission, HAC]. . . . I don't know who help the lei sellers. I wasn't around, 'cause I used to work and I had to, you know. So, the Aeronautic want the lei sellers to go in, so they have a meeting at that time. And they made that grass shack.

IH: Oh, the . . .

MO: Grass shack lei stand.

IH: . . . [Hawai'i] Aeronautics [Commission]?

MO: Yeah. So, at that time, when we was with the Aeronautic, the overhead was very small. Hardly anybody, you know, working. Not like today. Big overhead.

IH: So, when they built the grass shacks, was that on state [territory] property?

MO: Yeah, in the airport property. When we first started, we was on a road. Today, you cannot sell lei on a road. So, that's a good move that a lei seller could have gone in there.

IH: How was business when you moved?

MO: Well, it wasn't much, but where you find a place like that with water facility, electrical, telephone, all for twenty dollars a month? Yeah, oh, that was good. And you have a parking there, behind. When we was on the road, there was no telephone. You had to go pay telephone or whatever. When we went into Aeronautic, you got everything in the grass shack.

IH: How many grass shacks were there?

MO: There was, gee, fifteen? I think around fifteen of them or something like that.

IH: Were all those people originally on the first stand?

MO: Yeah. Somehow, Martina['s mother, Agnes Makaiwi] came in afterwards. Somehow the governor helped her, got in there. Yeah, she wasn't on the road.

IH: Oh, was she the only one?

MO: I don't know. I think she was the only one, but. . . .

IH: So, you don't know the details of that transaction with the Aeronautics Board?

MO: No. I wasn't there, so I don't know.

IH: About what year was that move made?

MO: Gee, that's '49 [1952]? Anyway, before '50.

IH: Before the '50s?

MO: That's before the '50s. Then, over there from that time on to about nineteen what, '59 [1962]? Made a new--that lei stand.

IH: You made another move?

MO: Yeah. That was only the old, fifteen stalls used to be, too.

IH: There was also fifteen stalls there?

MO: Mm hmm, yeah.

IH: And where was that located?

MO: Right by the new lei stand, now. Not too far away. Because at that time, the entrance used to be right in front of the old lei stand, going into the main terminal. You want to come to inter-island, you stay on your right after you go. You get in the lei stand, you can. If you don't want to go lei stand, you go straight, see? So, as time goes, they improve so much with new roads and whatnot. Make it all wider, too.

IH: So the stands you're in now, that's actually the third move since you been on [airport] property? The third stand?

MO: One, two, three, four--yeah. Yeah, third now.

IH: So, was the cars, and then the grass shack, and then . . .

MO: And the other lei stand made out of wooden, you know.

IH: Wooden building?

MO: Yeah, wooden building.

IH: And now it's concrete?

MO: Concrete, yeah. And those days, the wooden building very small. The space was something like, maybe, eight feet by fifteen feet. Narrow, like that. Yeah, was so narrow.

IH: And today, it's little bit bigger.

MO: Oh, it is bigger today, mm hmm.

IH: How is the relationship between the lei sellers? It seems that you folks have been together for so long.

MO: Before it was terrible.

IH: Why do you say that?

MO: Airport police come out quite often. Not the front part. More was among the family on the center part.

IH: So, that's at this new stand?

MO: New stand, no.

IH: At the last one? The wooden stand?

MO: Yeah, wooden stand. Yeah, oh, lot of times like that. The new stand, no. So far all right.

IH: What about before on Lagoon Drive?

MO: Well, as far as I can remember, they had some slight argument, that's it. And then, when they get together, the [lei sellers'] association make a party, oh, all happy up. (Laughs)

IH: So, you think, some of the arguments was due to competition between the businesses?

MO: Maybe something like that. Due to competition. But as time goes, they getting older, they realize, and then, you know. So, today, no, hardly any. Only thing is, which I can see is, sometime, when the state says no parking around the ten-minute parking, they just overdo it, some of them. And then, they get a argument, you know. "You not supposed to park in there." This and that, now and then. Because, you know, you like to let the front open all the time for customers. That's for the customer, not for the employee, or for the lei sellers, you know. If I do come in with a flower, don't have parking, I just come in, unload, and I'm out. Not even five minutes, I'm out of the area. Because you're taking space. But I just. . . . Not bad, you know. Everybody get along.

IH: Yeah. Oh, that's nice. Do you remember when the lei sellers association was formed?

MO: From the old lei stand. The grass shack.

IH: The grass shack?

MO: Mm hmm [yes]. That's when they used to have member, even employee, was quite a bit.

IH: Big membership?

MO: Yeah, big membership.

IH: Why was the association formed?

MO: In those days. I don't know when, but I know that's when the association was there.

IH: Do you know why it was formed?

MO: I guess just to get together. Like today, it's a big help. If something goes wrong, we go see the governor's aide. They are big help. So, I been to the Department of Transportation, upstairs, Downtown, talk to Mr. Higashionna. I mean, you do talk, you get someplace. The governor, nice man. We went to the governor how

many times, you know, nice.

IH: Governor Ariyoshi?

MO: Ariyoshi, yeah.

IH: And he helped you folks?

MO: Plenty, plenty.

IH: Oh, yeah? How did he help you?

MO: Like, you know, this overhead [Department of Transportation head] over here at this airport said that any time something like if the older one go, it don't go to the family like, you know.

IH: The lei stand?

MO: Yeah.

IH: Oh, you mean, if the owner pass away?

MO: Yeah, something like that. They said, you know, now, they won't have the owner, daughter or whatever. So we go see the governor. So, today, something like Rachel's Lei Stand, she went [Rachel Pakele died in 1977], the [grand]daughter [Sandra Santimer] take over, yeah? So, as times goes, everything. Like Ella [Yasuhara], the mom [Irene Sims] retired, Ella is there.

IH: So, the Department of Transportation wanted to . . .

MO: Those days, they don't want to take responsibility doing everything. I don't know why. But when you ask for it and you see the head people like that, you get some action. So, to me, if the governor or like the Department of Transportation--like he was in charge, Mr. Higashionna, they was nice people. You want something, you get it.

IH: You folks had support from them?

MO: Yeah. So, like right now, our lease gonna--we get fifteen year, subject to five, five, five: fifteen. When that comes around, if we don't have something to do, they're going to pull us. You know, do something about it, too. (We moved to our present location in 1978, but the lei sellers held back on the lease to try and get the second name, an heir to the stand, signed onto the lease. We went to Governor Ariyoshi to help. He wrote a letter to the Department of Transportation in our favor. We signed the lease in 1980 without the second name on the lease but with verbal reassurance from the Department of Transportation.) Because I can remember the delinquent--the one that don't pay their rent. Quite a few there, maybe two or three. To me, they make some money, but I don't know, they don't manage it right or what. So they get notice from the airport. Every time, notice, notice. So the last one, I remember, Ella

already was the president [of the Airport Lei Sellers Association], so they gave 'em notice. Put the rental on minimum of \$800 a month or you going to get out.

IH: They increased the rent?

MO: Yeah, rent. It's based on instead of 10 percent, they put a flat rent, \$800. And somehow, I think three or four of them had that kind of notice. So, we seen the governor's aide. When they go check on it, even Department of Transportation big boss [Downtown] don't know anything about that. It was right through the airport. And that was all fixed up after. So, somehow, association, we got to get together, or otherwise, they be in trouble. Our lease going to come up. I don't know what, you know. If they had their chance, they'll put the whole thing on bid.

IH: All of the lei stands?

MO: They would put 'em on bid. Somebody tried, asked for that.

IH: Somebody tried to do that already?

MO: Yeah, outsiders put in a note to the Department of Transportation-- why don't put the lei sellers on bid, the lei stands. Yeah, they did that.

IH: When was this?

MO: Oh, that, when we was in the old lei stand. So we can say six, seven years back [1978].

IH: And what happened of that?

MO: Just forget it. After all, when you talk to somebody.

IH: So they never did put it up for bid?

MO: No. Then I think when we went to the new place, now, this concrete lei stand, that's when they made that lease for us. We was on temporary, year to year.

IH: At the wooden shack, the wooden building?

MO: Yes, the old . . .

IH: You were on year to year?

MO: Year to year, yeah. This one, we have five years. And so, the five years gonna expire this November or something like that. So, five years subject to fifteen years. So, not bad. But we get a basic [rent of] \$200 [and] 10 percent [of the gross sales]. So, you know, I mean, we're doing all right. Yeah, we're doing all right. The average rental I pay out is more like around \$600, sometimes \$7[00].

During graduation, the highest I remember, hoo, almost \$1,000-something.

IH: That's a monthly rental?

MO: Monthly rental, yeah. But average, it's around \$600, around that. I mean, if you do business good, if you get good customers, you make out.

IH: Did your children ever come down to the lei stand? Did your children ever help out at the lei stand?

MO: Yeah, when they was small, (chuckles) my daughter, my son. They was good at it.

IH: How old were they when they started stringing leis?

MO: Well, about (chuckles) five years old. When they first do, maybe they do is just pluck the flower, clean the flower. We do the stringing, see. Yeah, those days, was all family up here. Today, we get labor. But that time, up to the wooden building, we [had] hardly any labor.

IH: In the wooden building, you didn't have labor?

MO: No. Until only one labor--was one or two.

IH: Oh, so only at this new place you started hiring . . .

MO: This new place, you start to see plenty outsiders, yeah.

IH: So, only about five years now that you started to hire.

MO: I would say about six years or seven years. Wooden building, maybe we had only about one we have, that's all.

IH: Before that, it was all family run?

MO: Family, yeah, family.

IH: So, how come now you have to hire laborers?

MO: Well, my daughter not here. My son don't (chuckles) want to help too much.

IH: Is that true of all the lei stands, the children are not coming out as much?

MO: Well, the second stand [Sophia's], the family still come out, but they don't have too much helping hand, eh? When they all--you know, your daughters, they get married and they go. Just like her stand, Harriet's stand, the daughter get married and schoolteacher. So, she got to hire help. But sometimes, like summer vacation, you see her down there helping the mom.

IH: So, were there a lot of children that grew up around the lei stands?

MO: Oh, plenty. Especially summertime, you find them all, plenty, over there. Grandsons and granddaughter and whatnot, all . . .

IH: Do they all help stringing leis?

MO: Well, when they small, they play around, but when they come little bit older, they going put 'em to work. Plucking flower, opening ginger.

IH: So, do you think any of your children will take over your lei stand?

MO: Yeah, my son going to take over . . .

IH: He will?

MO: . . . because he's there nighttime. Clear the machine, everything.

IH: Does he enjoy stringing leis?

MO: Well, he help. When I really have some kind of order, bring the flower home and me and him just go. He's fast, too.

IH: Yeah? But does he have another job right now?

MO: No, he still go school, like taking up computer. And then, same time, he goes and teach kung fu.

IH: Do you think the lei stands will continue to be a family business?

MO: Well, as time come, after maybe he take over, you know, going be some labor help. You gotta have help, you know, labor. I mean, if the business is slow, then you know what you have to cut out is your labor. But so far, we can keep up.

IH: What kind of laborers do you have, do you hire? Experienced laborers?

MO: I have two part-time experienced labor. Two Hawaiians. Used to work for the grandma down at the airport. You know, way back, when they was small, they used to. They married today, but they come to me part-time, morning. Two days. One comes once a week, part-time. Only weekend. They Hawaiian. They really experienced, they're old-timer.

IH: Oh, that's good. That helps, yeah?

MO: Mm hmm [yes]. I have one Filipino girl that's pretty fast. And real responsible. She's there.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

IH: How would you compare the business today as compared to when you first started?

MO: Oh, big difference. You know, when we first started, just like I said, very little leis. Today, you got a volume business. You'd be surprised, too. Like they come here for vacation, when they go home, they buy a lei and they go home and take your calling card. And they call you up on the Mainland whenever occasion.

IH: And then, you'd send leis to the Mainland?

MO: Yeah. Send 'em through the airline, yeah. Surprising, tell you. Even first year, maybe, like I have one just send out quite a few leis. That was Marquette High School (of Chicago). When they first buy, used to be few leis, maybe 100 leis or maybe less. As time goes, it's getting bigger and bigger. The students, you know, high school students when they have occasion, the kids, they go for more. Yeah, every one get, yeah. And my other one is like, they in Utah. They have a flower business, but local people way back, maybe. Something like Anita Payne. She called the other day. She want 200 loose vanda. And send 'em up through Western Cargo. They get 'em next day.

IH: You send it on the airlines?

MO: Airlines, yeah.

IH: Isn't it kind of expensive on the airlines?

MO: Twenty-one dollars, up to minimum of twenty-five, thirty-five pounds. You know, you get 'em next day. But if you are sending something like a lei for birthday or whatnot, we just send 'em through Express Mail, post office.

IH: How long does that take?

MO: Next day. Only time I don't send out is on like Mother's Day, Christmas. The post office got a bulk of mail going out, so they don't care.

IH: What kind of leis last to go to the Mainland?

MO: I guess everything that goes to the Mainland lasts, even plumeria.

IH: Oh, yeah?

MO: Yeah, because they get 'em next day. Or, sometimes, they say it's kind of turning, but they still--those people, compared to us, they say, oh, the leis, you know, the smell. So, very seldom I get complaint.

IH: When you have a big order, like 500 leis or 1,000 leis, do you make them all yourself?

MO: Yeah. But I didn't get that kind of order yet, 1,000 leis. If was 100 leis, 150, then I make 'em myself. Make 'em ahead of time, and just watch it. Move the old one and put the new one in. Then pack 'em. The day it's going, we pack the fresh one and send 'em up. I mean, it's not hard to make it, 100, 150 leis.

IH: Do you deal with any tour companies?

MO: Yes.

IH: You sell leis for tour companies?

MO: Yes. They get pick-up when they call ahead of time or last minute. "Oh, I need ten leis." "I need thirty leis, eighty leis." When it come to eighty leis, they got to call me ahead, so I can prepare to make it. But ten leis, twenty leis, we always have on hand, so. I only pick the kind that I get paid when I send the billing in. Send me the check right away. (Chuckles)

IH: Yeah. Why, some of them don't?

MO: If they don't, I give 'em warning and just cut 'em out.

IH: Do you have any time away from the lei stand these days?

MO: Yeah.

IH: What do you do on your days off?

MO: I go fishing.

IH: Where do you go fishing?

MO: Kāne'ohe Bay. I still go spear fishing.

IH: Spear fishing? Oh, yeah? Oh, terrific.

MO: Yeah, still go spear fishing. Every year, once a year, I take time off and I go. That's when my son take over completely. I'm in Alaska.

IH: Oh, you go to Alaska to go fishing? Wow.

MO: Yeah. Once a year. Lot of fun.

IH: Yeah? So, salmon fishing?

MO: Yeah.

IH: You usually bring back a lot of salmon?

- MO: Sometimes. So, down here, we go. You know, like before, you say manini was a rubbish fish, too. Not anymore, not anymore. You get your spear. And I can tell you where we used to go get lobster whenever you like. Not now. No more.
- IH: Yeah, now, too many people, yeah, out there.
- MO: Yeah, too many people. In our time, we had to make the boat, you know. When the fiberglass boat come from the Mainland, that's it. They start to, you know. Before you make all the wooden boat.
- IH: Oh, when did the fiberglass boat come in?
- MO: Chee, that boat came in what year now? Someplace in the '50s.
- IH: That's when . . .
- MO: That's when. Those days, we used to use goggles. Make homemade goggles.
- IH: In the '50s?
- MO: Before the '50s, yeah. Even in the '50s, early part of '50s, no more . . .
- IH: What did you make the goggles out of?
- MO: Koa wood.
- IH: Koa wood?
- MO: And the spear gun, we used to make 'em out of pipe. And put hinges, regular hinge. We used to buy the spears [rods]. Hawaiian Electric, we used to go and buy the rod from them, six-foot rods, and then we make our own spears. Today, they get all the fiberglass spear, fins. No fins those days. Yeah, time, that's when, boy, when you go out, you come home by the bag of fish, bag of squid. Now days, all wiped out.
- IH: So you think when they brought the fiberglass boat in the '50s, that's when fishing really took off?
- MO: As times goes, more people buy the boat.
- IH: Yeah, so it's easier.
- MO: Mm hmm [yes]. I even used to go out trolling, but I just quit.
- IH: So how many hours do you think you put in the lei stand every day?
- MO: Oh, about, let's say, eight, ten hours maybe. But if you want to just skip out, "Okay, let's go get lunch outside." You know, tell my son, "We go eat lunch outside," we go. So, that's taking an hour

or two. Or another, when we fixing this house. Like now, I'm fixing this house, the kitchen. Run to Kilgo or City Mill, buying material for fix it up. Because this is something like how many years now, this thing, '56? Something like that.

IH: You moved in this house in 1956 . . .

MO: [Nineteen] sixty.

IH: Nineteen sixty? So, twenty-five years in this house.

MO: Yeah. But it was built just. . . . Yeah, twenty-five years. We could get very small mortgage. Very small. Only about \$6,000.

IH: So, when you bought this house, that's when you were working for the navy?

MO: Yeah.

IH: How many years did you work for the navy?

MO: I put in the navy about twenty-one years.

IH: During that time, were you always going down to the lei stand?

MO: Yeah. Long hours there. Help down there. That's why I said, family affair, you know. The more you make, that's your own. You don't have to make payroll. Not such thing like keeping books. Today, the insurance. To keep with their workmen's comp, temporary disability, hoo, all big money.

IH: And that's because you have hired labor?

MO: Yeah. When you hire labor, you got to carry all that.

IH: So, it's really turned into a business today.

MO: Mm hmm, yeah.

IH: How do you think the lei sellers coming from families of--mostly all of them came from lei-selling families, right?

MO: Right.

IH: Before days, you didn't have too much book work. But then, today, like you said, you have a lot of book work. How do you think the owners are handling that?

MO: If you don't have a labor, you don't have to know too much book work. Because naturally, the payroll got to be made, you know, the time card, keep time.

IH: Everybody seems to be able to handle the paperwork?

MO: Lot of them, they asking me how they do it. I show 'em. I usually show 'em how I keep mine. And my daily sheet, I always keep my daily sheet. That's why we go there at night, to clear the register, take the reading. You know, we go down from zero to 10,000, back to zero to 10,000. Keeping--good book work. That way it's easier for the auditor from airport to come and check it. Because it's on 10 percent basis so they come out quite often.

IH: Oh, yeah?

MO: Yeah, they come out quite often. So, you got to keep the book right.

IH: Does everybody stay pretty up-to-date on their books?

MO: Yeah. Up-to-date on rental and gross income. That's the number one thing when you want to be in there. And it's not a bad. . . . I mean, you get to meet the people, you know.

IH: As lei sellers, do you folks get together? Besides the association meetings, do you get together for any kind of outings or parties or anything like that?

MO: Only when they get party for wedding, whatever, graduation party, then you go down there. Otherwise, any other time, too tired to go out at night. When maybe young, all right, but my age already, I rather be. . . . After three o'clock, my night shift come in, then I'm home.

IH: What time do you go in in the morning?

MO: Shee, I'm up about at about 5:30, 6:00 [a.m.]. Then, like 6:30, I'm up Aloha Airlines, pick the flower, bring 'em down this morning.

IH: Where did you go?

MO: Aloha Airlines, pick up the . . .

IH: Oh, Aloha Airlines.

MO: Yeah, pick my flower from Maui.

IH: Oh, so when you get flowers from the outer islands, do you have to go to the airlines, pick it up?

MO: Yeah. Certain ones, I go and pick it up. Certain ones, they have an in-between salesman.

IH: What flowers do you get from Maui?

MO: Maui is carnation. Kaua'i, it comes like maile, and even the clover, all from Kaua'i.

IH: Clover?

MO: Yeah, the purple flower, clover [globe amaranth, locally called bozos]. Over here, it's hard to raise 'em because the bird eat 'em. The sparrow pick on 'em.

IH: What about the Big Island?

MO: Big Island is mostly all vanda [orchid]. They have anthurium, but I don't handle anthurium. You see some of the anthurium at the lei stands. I don't want to go into that. If I got to put anthurium, then you going see couple more going put on, you know. They see you got anthurium. So, I just stay away from that.

IH: Do you get flowers from this island?

MO: Mm hmm [yes].

IH: What kind of flowers do you get from O'ahu?

MO: From over here, we get plumeria. We get big plumeria growing in Wai'anae now. Two big growers, Wai'anae. Because she used to be a cattle rancher at that time. So, they have big place in Wai'anae. She bring all the plumeria to all the lei stands down there. The other one I get, plumeria, it come every other day. We get the tuberose from Waimānalo. Then you notice the dendrobiums are coming up.

IH: Dendrobium orchids?

MO: Yeah. All down Kahalu'u, right down around that area. They even fix up a place where they get nicely planted, yeah, with the. . . . They're all coming up. So the farmer getting big. Not like those days before.

IH: Do flower prices vary?

MO: Yeah. On occasion, they go right up. Even Maui. The growers, they know that graduation coming, "Okay, your price going to be so and so." As soon as the graduation over, then the prices drop back to normal. But some of them, when they go up, they don't come down no more. They just stay on that price. So, as time goes, the flowers getting higher, expensive really. Not like the time we used to pay twenty cents a hundred on carnation. Not anymore. Well, same, the wage go up. Everything go up.

I can remember when before, the labor, you only pay, what? (Chuckles) Sixty cents an hour, then come seventy-five cents, then dollar. Look today, three dollar [\$3.35], minimum, eh?

IH: Everything comes up. But the lei prices, have they come up just as much, too?

MO: Yeah, yeah. When it's slow, then you kind of hold the price way down, but when come to good days, your price is up.

IH: Oh, so from day to day, it can vary?

MO: No. Day to day it's always the same, but graduation time, you know the price going up. Yeah, when occasion.

IH: Are there ever periods of time when it's really hard to get flowers?

MO: During the wintertime. But you get enough to keep on going. Yeah, during the wintertime.

IH: And during that time, does the price go up?

MO: Yes, it goes up. That's when you see the newscaster come out, "How come the price up?" You explain to 'em, look your flower there. I came on TV one time to say, you know, why the prices were up. I say, "Well, look at this flower. Da kine prices you pay on the flower and you cannot use it all." So, it gets that way. You know, like today, the farmers are getting very smart and growing them during wintertime. Now, only time you going get bad flower and lack of flower is when the weather, you know, you get a big storm, big rain come, that's when. The farmer just gotta lose their production. And they want to make the same income, so they boost the price up. They have to bring in so much to keep up with the labor and everything, so they boost the price. So, when you think of it, there's lot of fun in between all the kind of things that goes on. Even the growers get that way. When the growers go that way, (chuckles) we get that way. Then the public start to make noise. And first thing you know, the newscaster come out. They interview you.

IH: Because they don't realize everything involved.

MO: Oh, they realize it. They come out on the news on the certain-certain time news. They say, oh, the price is up because of so and so. They are really nice people.

IH: Was there ever a time when you had to close the lei stand?

MO: Hurricane Iwa.

(Laughter)

MO: Yeah. Otherwise, no. We stay open because we have charge account. Even how slow it is, you know. If they get charge account and you not there, something, they going get mad with you. Like Pioneer Federal, Powerine Oil, you know, those people. (Powerine Oil is a Mainland company, but they own seven houses in Kailua. They have that Coin Power gas station here. They buy leis when someone is coming to visit from the Mainland. They write the name on the invoice.) Tori Richard, or you turn around to National Amusement. You don't know when they're going come up to buy leis. So, we open. We have a charge tab. They know exactly what to do. Just sign 'em, take the leis. Then, end of the month, my son do the billing now. Typing 'em out and everything. So, you think about

it, it's fun.

IH: Yeah. I think it's nice that you folks all enjoy the business.

MO: Yeah, I enjoy it. When I want to go out and go fishing, I'm going. Nothing going stop me, yeah.

IH: Actually, you could retire already. You don't have to go down there.

MO: Yeah, I could, but I just don't want to stay home, watching TV, and falling asleep. I did try a lot of time, watching TV. How good the picture, fall asleep. So, I rather be down there, talking over to them, or doing some work, stringing. And while now, construction going on over there, I get to know every one of those guys around there.

IH: The workers?

MO: Yeah, the outside contractors.

(Laughter)

MO: Yeah, talk to them. Then, they come, "Papa, can I use the phone?"

I say, "Come on, use the phone."

Or the electrical contractor. Yeah, that's why you get to know all them. And start talking story, so something good. Keep you active. Keep my mind working. Oh, I don't want to stay home. I could stay home. I draw about \$700 in social security. But I just don't want to quit.

IH: So, you folks started in the lei business in 1945?

MO: [Nineteen] forty-seven.

IH: [Nineteen] forty-seven? So, that's almost forty years already.

MO: Yeah. In the airport time. Long time. And I think I enjoy it. I cannot say it was a bad time, no. Every bit of it.

IH: Would you say it was the main income for your family or was supplemental income to your job?

MO: Right now, it's the main income. Before, no, I have lot of things going on. I even had a bar, too.

IH: You used to own a bar? Oh, yeah? Where was this?

MO: (Chuckles) Hotel Street.

IH: Oh, yeah? When did you own the bar?

MO: You know, the Gibson's Bar used to be right on Alakea and Hotel Street. On the corner, they used to have that.

IH: Gibson's Bar?

MO: Gibson, and then turn around. I took the whole building. I paid \$675 rental. I turn two story into rental unit, and downstairs used to be the bar.

IH: And you used to run the bar?

MO: Yeah. Hired hand on the bar. Lot of experience, too.

IH: When was this?

MO: Let's see now. [Nineteen] fifty-nine, sixty, sixty-one. I quit something like when they condemned the building. They get new building now down there. Right on the corner right there.

IH: But you started in the '60s?

MO: I went in too late. I should have gone in earlier. The one that was in there during the wartime made lot of money. They made lot of money.

IH: Oh, yeah. All the servicemen.

MO: Yeah, oh, all line up, huh? But then, even my time, well, not bad. You know, like the ship come in. Used to be the British Oriana, all the British ships, passenger liners, still coming. They all used to come in to the bar.

IH: Oh, they still coming in, now, too?

MO: Yeah, they still coming in. Like the Oriana, British Shipping Line.

IH: And those boys used to come to the bar?

MO: Yeah, they come, Pier 11, big ones.

IH: The bar you had Downtown, was it mostly servicemen?

MO: Servicemen. Hotel Street, there's nothing but servicemen. You get to know the servicemen by name, too. So, they come steady. Especially payday, then you see, oh, everybody come out. They used to have local people come out, too, just to play their shuffleboard. You have to have a board. And there was betting on that thing, too, while they drinking beer. Usually, you got to buy the beer.
(Chuckles)

IH: So, where'd you find time to run a bar when you were working the navy and the lei stand . . .

MO: I don't know. When I was working the navy, too, I even had a Venetian blind shop. Yeah, I had a Venetian blind. I bring the material from. . . . But Venetian blind, that material change so fast that you cannot buy a big load. Because the slat change, anything change. Like this kind draw drape. I put up plenty draw drape around. Yeah, put up plenty this kind, draw drape. I was a hard worker.

IH: Yeah. You had all kinds of business.

MO: Yeah, I was a hard worker.

IH: So your wife mostly took care of the lei stand, then.

MO: Up to '70?

IH: Nineteen seventy?

MO: Yeah. (Since then she'd rather stay home and do other things.)

IH: And were the children helping her at that time?

MO: Yeah. My girl was, until '70. I don't know, somewhere around there, I let 'em stay home. Then she used to go traveling here and there.

IH: So, the lei stand is named after her? Dorothy's Lei Stand, after your wife?

MO: Mm hmm, yeah. Department of Transportation, we had two names on there--my name and her name together. So, I just can go over there, take over.

IH: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to add that you can remember.

MO: Well, I don't know. What you people are doing, I think it's going to be good for the lei sellers.

IH: Yeah, I hope so.

MO: It is going to be good for the lei sellers. It's going to take long before it's finished? The whole year or more?

IH: This project? Oh, wait.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

IH: I was wondering, how often do you folks elect a president of the [Airport] Lei Sellers Association?

MO: Like if Ella is now, we going to leave 'em in there because she's doing good (chuckles) work. Just like when I was in there, I stayed

seven years.

IH: So, you don't have a regular term of office?

MO: No, no.

IH: Just till the person wants to get out?

MO: Yeah, right. And then, you know, we put new--who want to be president with the vote. So, I still hold office there. I still hold office as a treasury.

IH: Oh, you're the treasurer?

MO: Yeah.

IH: When were you president? What years were you the president of the [Airport] Lei Sellers [Association] . . .

MO: Well, just about a year ago, I just put my resignation. But then I was about six years back at the old wooden lei stand.

IH: Oh, so around 1978, or somewhere around there?

MO: Yeah, '78, something like that. Long time. At that time, I go to the Department of Transportation, and there was the older people down there, department head. They were nice people. You ask for something, you get it. Today, the department head is just like Dr. Shimada. They're only about thirty-four years old. Oh, they're strict. They go according to the book. Very strictly according to the book. So, you have to play a little politics to get over their head. Before, no. I go direct to Mr. Kraft, airport manager. "I want this, I want that." We get it. It was really nice people.

IH: So, you feel in the past they [Department of Transportation] used to support you?

MO: Yes.

IH: And today, you don't feel they support you?

MO: Today, no, I don't think so. But now, lately, I remember that when a stand was open, they don't want to give to. . . . There is a name list who want to come into the airport, lei sellers. Mostly the daughters of the original lei seller, like the Ventura get two, three daughters, eh? They won't give it to them. They give 'em to the outsiders. They ask. If you have a family over there, the lei stand, they won't. Yeah, that bad because the newer one. But way back when they was old-timers there, oh, just like that.

So, I don't know what's going to happen. But, we play a little politics. Like what you doing, you help. And then, we get the booklet [oral history transcripts]. I think something, outcome,

will be all right. Go look forward to the kind of things. Because we been there so long. We like to be there.

IH: You have been there so long as a group.

MO: Yeah, as a group. And we like to be there. Even if the children take over and keep it going.

Like the airlines, too, they do big business too, they buy. Not only passengers. They got to buy leis for their VIP. So, they order. Like last month or so, Japan Airlines. So long they been there that they had retirees. They want to cut down the work force; in other words, the labor. So, they said, the old-timers all to retire. You know, volunteer retire and they gave 'em good benefits. So they buy so many leis, \$91 worth of leis. Japan Airlines. So the airlines, like Japan, Western, American Airlines. Or I have United kitchen. You know, they have a kitchen here, United Airlines. They get occasion, like certain, they need so many leis, they come to me. You know, not bad. You get to know all those kind, yeah. Like Western Cargo.

IH: So, it seems like you have a lot of accounts.

MO: Yeah, lot of accounts. Like for instance, I had to send something out to Chicago. I just go to United Cargo. I get to know those guys by name. I say, "Wayne, fix me up for this shipment." I say, "I want air bill." Even if I'm going to ship it two days, three days, or four days after, all written down.

"How many boxes?"

I said, "Four boxes." And all the air bill number he give me, too. So, when they [the Mainland customers] call again, I just do is you give 'em the air bill number and they can trace it easy. So, you know, all along I been down there, you get to know every one of them. Every one of 'em. American Airlines, they buy plenty. I think they're right next to United Airlines in business.

IH: American Airlines?

MO: Yeah. United is number one. I think American Airlines, number two. Right next to. Japan Airlines is pretty good, too. But they buy just for the VIP who are coming. So, maybe he call for red, white, you know. But they take nothing but carnations, the big ones. Double carnations.

IH: Yeah, the big ones, yeah. What would you say is your biggest selling lei?

MO: It's just a three-dollar lei, the tuberose mixture. Or anything, tuberose mixture of carnation, all kind of mixture. That kind of common one, the average one. That's the biggest seller.

IH: What are some of the other varieties of leis that you carry today?

MO: Well, you know, I mean you make the average kind of lei like the tuberose with carnation. You get the orchid and carnation. Or you get plain orchid. We get all about the same price, yeah? The bracket of prices about the same. So they come around, sometimes, certain month, like they have meeting or school. Like 'Aiea School, they buy from me, too, when they had some kind of conference or whatnot. That's the lei they going for--tuberose-carnation. That's the cheapest, yeah?

IH: Do you also carry specialty leis, like maile and ginger?

MO: Yeah, very little. I always have 'em on hand. Once a week, it comes, maile leis. Ginger come every other day. So, you just take enough to keep you for that two days.

IH: But you don't sell too much of those leis?

MO: Sometimes that thing move, but then you run out. But most of the time, no. Just sell that. Pikake comes every other day, too. You just take just enough, maybe one dozen or twelve, two days. That's it. As long as you have 'em in hand, in the icebox, that pikake, don't take it out of the wrapping, it lasts long time. So, you move the old one first. But then, sometimes, that pikake might just move, and you're out of pikake.

IH: So, the pikake comes already strung?

MO: Yeah. Ready-made. Pikake, cigar . . .

IH: Does it always come that way?

MO: Yeah, from way back. We used to string that tiny flower with a tiny needle, but lot of work. So, they start to string it. The price come up, but still yet, the labor. So, you can keep the leis for quite a while, like 'ilima lei, maile. Maile, you can keep for about a week, two weeks, and when you take it out, still that's good. Sometimes when the maile move so fast, then you look. Oh, we don't have maile couple days. The maile come once a week and we only take five. Five maile. When come to like occasion time, yeah, you buy more. That's why, you got to watch what you buy. Watch what you buy.

IH: I guess that comes with experience, huh?

MO: Yeah, yeah, what you buy. Like so slow, the tuberose, yesterday I say, "Oh, we cancel everything." We just cancel.

IH: Oh, because it's slow now?

MO: Yeah, right now it's very slow. So, you cannot buy.

IH: Is this always a slow season?

MO: Yeah, after Labor Day, always. Always after Labor Day. Up to Labor Day, everything all right. Then all of a sudden, slow down. Then after Labor Day, we going depend on this bad weather.

(Laughter)

MO: So, the less flowers. We look forward to a lot of the winter months. Oh, another thing we have is a State Visitor's Information Bureau, VIP. They have an office and a staff to take care all the VIP, including what the governor use. So, they buy it from each stand, they follow up. Like just this past month, certain stand don't have that flower, they call you up. They get to know me good because when, personal flower leis, they like. Sometimes I say, "Okay, I take care." I don't sell 'em, you know. So, when the stand that they have to have the leis from and cannot, they call me.

IH: Oh, works out, eh?

MO: If not my time, the month not my month, they still have one or two accounts, they bought. The last one they asked for was carnations, six carnation leis. And that stand, was Gladys Lei Stand, didn't have it. So, they called me. So, their price is good, you know. Their prices is good because we ask for certain-certain kind of price and they give it to you. You get paid from the state, special account. So, like the governor, boy, he look for the nice lei, occasion, yeah? That's why, every lei you see him on with the TV and the picture, whatnot, it all comes from the airport. Airport buy it. Because they come out of the visitor information program. But when somebody from the Philippines like [President Ferdinand] Marcos and the wife come, pikake.

IH: They always buy from you folks?

MO: Yeah, when my time. In a good month, they buy around \$600, the highest. A good month. If the VIP don't come too much, then you going only see make \$200, \$300. But your time come, every month, certain month. Then you prepare for it, already. That's the visitor information program, they call it.

IH: Oh, that's nice that they give you the business.

MO: Yeah. They get all from the lei sellers, yeah. So, any occasion like the governor or the wife want something, or the son graduating, prom or whatever, you know they get prom, they ask for special lei. Roses, baby rose with what do you call, all strung up into something like twined with maile. Oh, yeah. Today, the kids, students, they go all out, not like in our time. When they get prom, wow, what they ask for.

IH: What are some of the things they ask for?

MO: Like my neighbor, the girl just, Radford High School. They have wristband, the flower, you know? Wristband. (Laughs) And leis, and headbands, oh, boy. And the parents go all out. Yeah, just like, maybe that's the first one that going to prom, the parents go (chuckles) all out. Boy any kind of thing. They don't care what they spend. If you don't have pikake, they willing to pay any kind. "You can get the pikake for me?" That's how it is.

IH: They'll pay anything for it?

MO: Yeah, they do. Yeah. But I tell them, "I don't have it." Tell 'em, "Go see who you can get from."

IH: So, you think local people . . .

MO: Yeah, local people. Whatever the daughter or the son ask for, and maybe that's the first one, they're going to look for it. Even if they out of season, they're going look for it. So, when it comes to March, April, around April, May, that's when the prom. The senior prom, junior prom. That's when the business really pick up.

IH: So, you think today that the local people spend more on leis for proms than before days?

MO: Yeah, yeah, more.

IH: What about on a daily basis? Do you think local people wear more leis now or before?

MO: Before.

IH: Before?

MO: Yeah, not now, yeah. But when come to this kind of occasion like that, prom, they go all out. They buy lei, they get their dance, and then they go out dinner to Waikiki. I think they seen 'em in the news where the guy spend maybe \$100 going just to the nightclub. Hoo!

IH: Hoo.

(Laughter)

IH: You lucky your kids all grown already. (Chuckles) But did local people wear leis often before?

MO: I think the Mainland people do more.

IH: More? Even before days?

MO: Before, yeah, you see 'em around. I remember in my young days, you won't believe it, but way back before the war, I even wen drive taxi. And I used to take customers from Kalihi to Downtown and I

stopped at the Maunakea Street, pick up a lei, twenty cents one double carnation at that time. I mean, we go for that kind of stuff before. Put on the leis. Or put 'em on the mirror, you know, the leis. (Chuckles)

IH: Oh, you used to buy it for yourself?

MO: Yeah, for myself. Twenty cents, huh?

IH: So, before days, you think the people used to wear leis just . . .

MO: More. Today, if you ever see somebody with a lei, then it's a Haole, White people. Very seldom---the local people, they go for more feather lei with the hat, yeah? You notice that? Feather lei. I have a hat with feather lei but I don't care to put it on.

IH: Yeah, I think today if you see local people with leis, it's more special occasion, right?

MO: Yeah. Mm hmm, right. In Memorial [Day], they go to the graveyard, too, take leis. That's when they all out. Father's Day, Mother's Day, they're all out there. Like even Father's Day, not too much, but I notice the Samoans turn out.

IH: Oh, yeah?

MO: Yeah. Down airport, ho, the Samoans for how many years now I notice the Samoans. When they come for an ordinary lei, then that means somebody is coming or going. They kind of try to cut down the price. But when it comes to that kind of day [special occasion], they pay the price. They spend. You'd be surprised.

IH: Oh, they try to bargain?

MO: Yeah, bargain on that (chuckles) kind of ordinary kind. But when special occasion, they go all out.

IH: So do you folks bargain like that at the lei stand?

MO: Yeah.

IH: You do?

MO: Yeah, we do. Say, "Okay, we give." Just to make that sale. Because you cannot keep that leis for a day. I mean, you got to get rid of it, see. So, when I look, hey, we got too much, I tell my girls, I say, "Don't hold. Let it go. If they want bargain, give it to 'em. As long as my flower money come back, give it to 'em." So, you know, through experience. You think about it, lot of fun. You know, think about what you do.

IH: You know, you said that your wife started lei selling by going to the nightclubs. Were there a lot of lei sellers that went to

nightclubs?

MO: Plenty, I think. Because when I had the bar, some of those girls used to come in, trying to sell. Walk inside, sell, and then walk out.

IH: Oh, yeah?

MO: Yeah, Hotel Street. They still do that, I think. They still do that, yeah?

IH: Yeah, they do.

MO: They still go. Mostly roses already in small bouquet, you know. They still do that. Walk inside, try to sell, and then walk out.

IH: Did a lot of people buy?

MO: Yeah, summertime, they buy, some of them. Depend who they trying to make the grade with. If they get a girl, they're going to buy. Yeah, they buy. Like Dorothy, we used to go, because the uncle['s nightclub], she used to have a chair, the table, and sit down right there. And walking in, walking out.

IH: Oh, at the uncle's place [La Hula Rhumba and Blue Lei]?

MO: Yeah. She don't have to go in, try hustle. When they coming in, coming out, see. That's how she used to sell. It was enough, those days, you know, yeah? When we went to the road, the first time, get hardly any leis. Not where we get 100 leis. Maybe lucky you have twenty different leis. Yeah, that's it. If you sell out, you going come home. Those were the days. And we have to buy ice. Like now, I don't buy ice. But the iceman still come around because the plumeria keep good in the ice.

IH: Oh, yeah? Better than the refrigerator?

MO: Yeah. Better for wet, eh? I have two refrigerator. One is regular cold. One is down because of the plumeria. Just keep 'em cool enough for plumeria. If you put the plumeria where the carnations are, it's going to burn. It burn the plumeria. So, one of the icebox, the temperature is low enough for keep plumeria. And plumeria is one of the flowers that is to the tour. Most cheapest lei. So, like now, the plumeria might be \$2.50. But somebody want to bargain with me for two dollars, I give it to him. So, some old-timers come around and say, "Chee, when I used to buy lei before, three for dollar." That's true, those days, way back.

IH: Way back. Yeah.

MO: Yeah, Lagoon Drive. (Chuckles) The grass shack, eh? They bring that up, but I say, "But today times are different." At that time, I didn't see no plumeria farmer. There wasn't no plumeria farmer

making a living out of plumeria. Because we used to have our own, or we go from neighbor to neighbor, pick up. But today, you got big farmers. Nice truck, they come in and bring lot of flowers. The boxes, too. Before, they used to put 'em in anything. Today, they're buying the box. Making 'em at Weyerhaeuser. What that, down on Nimitz [Highway] where they make the paper box? They pay sixty cents per box.

IH: Oh, Weyerhaeuser?

MO: Yeah, Weyerhaeuser. Sixty cents a box and they put name on top. So, I don't throw away the box. After I get through, I fold 'em up, open 'em up. I just leave 'em in the back. So, they all come down there, picking, taking their own box. Like this morning, the plumeria came in. I had four different large, Weyerhaeuser box, but I don't know what was. I tell 'em, "Take the box." They willing, they took the box, because they can use it. Some of them, they don't buy the box. But lot of like the Kam, you know, tuberose, Yamada, they buy the bulk and they keep 'em in storage. And they reuse the box off and on, back and forth, until the box get weak. And then, they throw 'em away. So, I always keep it, all the box. Like the orchid box, the carnation box. The carnation box, after so much, you get maybe fifteen. I tie 'em with a string. When I'm ready to take 'em down the airlines, I just take 'em, dump 'em on a pallet, and goes back free.

IH: Oh, yeah?

MO: Yeah. Airlines, when come in, you pay for it, but when going back, get name, so it goes back free to the grower. If you don't send 'em enough box, they going write to you and say, "Send box back, please."

(Laughter)

MO: You know, on the invoice, on the bottom, it's "please send (chuckles) boxes."

IH: Do they give you a discount for sending the boxes?

MO: But you know, we're limited to the rubbish can over there. We get one dumpster. Some of them, they just throw the box just like that inside.

IH: Oh, so fill up fast.

MO: Yeah. So that thing is piling up with boxes. Me, I never throw away boxes. I always fold 'em up for the grower. The boxes that don't have name, the plumeria people can use 'em. Box get name, don't touch because they . . .

IH: Oh, the farmers must all like you then, save them the boxes.

MO: Yeah. Oh, they know exactly where. They tell me always when they

come back, "Thank you, Mr. Onaga. Thank you." I always keep 'em. Because if I do throw 'em away I only piling up the dumpster. So, I just keep 'em for them. Sometimes I get after my worker because I don't see the early . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 14-3-1-85; SIDE ONE

MO: We have an early morning grower that bring carnations, too. This Inouye, Mr. Inouye. Husband and . . .

IH: Is that on O'ahu?

MO: Yeah. They live in Kalihi but they bring Maui carnations. Supply airport--only very few of us over here at the airport--and then, they go to Maunakea Street, and they go to florists. So, I keep their box, too. But in the morning when they come to take their box, they take the rubbish and put 'em all kind of place. So, I tell if they want me keep their box, they gotta keep my back door place clean. Don't just throw the rubbish any kind. Because I don't throw away even the orchid box or anything. They take 'em back. They send 'em back. Make use of 'em, you know. Because sixty cents to make one.

IH: Yeah, that's expensive.

MO: They don't make maybe 100. They like the order like 500 or 1,000. And they get their name on it. Some of the boxes say "please return box."

IH: Oh, yeah?

MO: Yeah, some of the boxes with the name.

IH: Do you think most of the lei sellers return the boxes?

MO: Yeah. Lot of them save the box in the back. When way back when we first was, we don't have that kind of, you know, come in that. Used to be any kind--beer box and anything that they can find. Now they have their own, the farmer getting their own. Even the plumeria farmer, Wai'anae, have their own plumeria box. She make--with the name on top. So, things change.

IH: Yeah. In the olden days when you bought flowers from the growers, did the growers deliver the flowers?

MO: Yeah, those days. And if you have to have certain kind of flowers, then I would go chase it--go get 'em. So, like crown flower, I used to go lot of time Nānākuli, trying to pick up that crown flower.

IH: You had to pick up your own?

MO: No, they pick it up. They get 'em ready for you.

IH: Oh, but you have to pick it up?

MO: Yeah, you pick it up. Those days, maybe, during wintertime, you won't find flowers. As time goes, today, the farmers are getting smarter on winter crops. But those days, you don't have it, so you have to chase for flowers, like that.

IH: Did you folks ever sell non-perishable leis like seed leis or paper leis, anything like that?

MO: No, no. We was restricted to lot of things, before, airport. We cannot even sell cut flower. Now, you can. And you cannot sell cut flower, you cannot sell candy lei. Till today, you cannot sell. I don't know if you can sell candy lei now, but I know we were restricted to lot of things. Only leis.

IH: Only flower leis?

MO: Mm hmm [yes]. Only flower leis. No paper lei, no candy . . .

IH: What about when you were in your first location on Lagoon Drive in the cars? Did you sell paper leis at that time?

MO: Before we get into the airport. But once we got in the airport, then when they start to have concession in the airport, that's when they stopped. The first, the shack, at that time, no concession in the airport. When we came to this wooden one, then they start to have like Greeters of Hawai'i, one of the biggest greeting people. Today, they get Island Greeters, they get all kind. But Mr. [Peter] Fithian used to be Greeters of Hawai'i. When he first went into the greeting business, he used to buy leis from us. We cannot supply him, he go to the next one, pick up all the leis. As time goes, then all of a sudden, he went on his own. He buy flower. He even have his own flower from the island--Big Island. He has a place, maybe one big area, where he hire workers and just do string leis. Lot of them, just stringing leis. And all big reefer, walk-in reefer. So, big. Him, then come Island Greeters, another big one. Get couple more.

IH: And they're inside the airport?

MO: Yeah, right in the airport. They even have a counter.

IH: They sell flower leis inside the airport?

MO: No. Only Greeters of Hawai'i.

IH: Oh, they greet, yeah. Do they buy their leis from you? The lei greeters?

MO: No, before, when they first start, they used to buy . . .

IH: They used to buy from you folks?

MO: Yeah, from the lei stand, airport.

IH: Where do they get 'em now?

MO: They buy their own flower. They string 'em. Every one of 'em. Just like I talked to you about Yamada and Kam. They bring the loose flowers to us; at the same time, they taking loose flowers to them, see. By the boxes, they're taking 'em to them. And they have stringers stringing the leis up. Those girls get all different color uniform in a muumuu. There're different color. Some in blue, some. . . . Yeah, it looks nice when they go greet people. When the plane come in, they have a sign saying what people they looking for. So, just imagine, lot of greeters in there, lei greeters.

IH: Yeah?

MO: Yeah, you'd be surprised how many in there, the people.

IH: Is that for tours? They greet tours or they greet individuals?

MO: I think they get certain tour come inside. Those leis are paid by the one that coming here. Because the package deal, you come here, a certain price, plus the leis. Like my tour, they pay for the lei, too. And when they come back, they get their leis back and they go home again. But some of them want to take extra leis, so they call ahead of time. Because their tour guide going say, "Oh, so-and-so need about six more leis for go back." We get 'em ready for 'em, they go.

IH: Oh, convenient, then.

MO: Yeah, it is. That's why, just imagine how many people come in here, going back. We luck out, and then. . . . And then, you know, if I get a call like that, then must be lot of them who has call--you know, orders.

IH: I assume that the bulk of your business comes from traveling passengers.

MO: Yeah, yeah.

IH: That's the bulk of your business?

MO: Yeah. You know because of the construction, but we used to have lot of people, after they check inside, they walk out. Buy their leis, and then they go back home. Because in the airport, what we sell three dollars, inside there is six dollars.

IH: Ooh.

MO: Yeah, it's terrible. That's how they come out, they buy. And we have more variety of leis, compared to what they have inside. When sometimes I walk in, go to the bank. I'm little early, I walk inside there, walk around. Their price of leis, man, the tuberose, plain tuberose, is \$6.00, \$5.99.

IH: Wow.

MO: Yeah, \$5.95, something like that. And they get paper lei. But they don't get no double carnation, too expensive. They try to stretch the flowers . . .

IH: They sell paper leis inside the airport?

MO: Yeah, they sell paper . . .

IH: But you're not allowed to sell outside?

MO: Yeah. Outside, we cannot because we was restricted to the cut flower, too. Now we can sell anthurium, yeah. Now we sell anthurium; before, no.

IH: So, when you were in the grass shacks, was it already restricted?

MO: We can sell candy lei. We used to sell. We used to buy the candy in the five-gallon can, you know.

IH: Oh, yeah?

MO: Yeah, we used to sell candy lei, because Japan people like that.

IH: How did you make it?

MO: We buy ready-made.

IH: Oh, you buy them ready-made?

MO: Yeah. You know, chewing gum, the gum all wrapped up in cellophane. We used to buy 'em ready-made, yeah. Down there at the airport today, you find all nothing but candy lei, even small bottles liquor. Yeah, plenty, all that.

IH: All inside the airport?

MO: Yeah, at the terminal. But today, the leis, everything is bid. Terrible kind of bid, concession, you know. For get in there, you got to bid.

IH: Bid?

MO: Yeah, bid . . .

IH: Oh, inside the terminal, yeah.

MO: And there's no small--they go it by the million. Oh, terrible.

IH: So, the lei sellers within the terminal are on a bid basis and you folks are not?

MO: No, we're not. I know somebody had tried to do that, but. . . . That's why, I tell you, we have to have some help by the politicians because they're the ones control. They the one control it.

IH: So, you had mentioned that Governor Ariyoshi had helped you in the past.

MO: Oh, yes.

IH: And he's still helping you now?

MO: Well, the last one we seen was about a year ago. To help out when they put the base rental of \$800.

IH: Oh, yeah, yeah. And he helped you with that?

MO: Yeah. That was good, you know. Backing off. Now, the guy in charge, Dr. Shimada, is little better now. He's little better. He call up before election day, last minute, saying for help vote for Eileen Anderson. It was too late. For mayor, yeah? Yeah, they didn't push the mayor too early. Last minute, they try to. So [Frank] Fasi got 'em beat. Then, he called and ask the lei sellers for help. See, so he getting better.

IH: This Shimada?

MO: Mm hmm [yes], Dr. Shimada. He's only about thirty-four.

IH: Is he head of the Department of Transportation?

MO: Airport. Before, used to be a older man named Nakamura. Oh, easy to talk to him. You tell 'em, oh, you want something. And he'd say, oh, just--you know, easygoing. Yeah, as time goes, the younger ones come in, going make it kind of rough for us. They go strictly by the book.

Just like, for instance, like me, I'm a lei seller there. Somebody--- like they had this Okinawa people came in for some kind of play they had not too long ago. He came and said, "Oh, you know, I need so many double carnation, but, you know, the price."

I said, "Ah, look, I give you the cost."

He's in Okinawa, the club. Yeah, after it was all over, he came back the next day or two days after, thanking me very much for helping him out. You know, that's how I go along him. Because some day, like graduation, he always come to me, you know.

IH: So you folks still give away leis sometimes.

MO: Yeah. Like certain times, they get certain occasion, like they don't have money, they go right down the line. Especially when I was president, they like so much leis. I say, "Okay, come down." I said, "Now, go down the line." And give five leis, five. But not going be fresh one (chuckles) they give, yeah? They give 'em five. Everybody give.

IH: Oh, for benefits?

MO: Yeah, some kind of. . . . Everybody give. I can remember the Department of Transportation, once a year they have some kind of. . . . At Pier 11, they have a party and they get some kind of award, best worker of the year or something like that. They used to buy the lei before. This last one, they didn't have enough money, so they said they like the cheapest they can. So, each stand, whoever want to donate the loose flower, we gave 'em. About 200 loose orchids or so. Oh, I forget what. Because when we gave 'em the loose flowers, then came Christmas, each one brought that soda water, a case of soda, can soda (chuckles).

So, you know, there's lot of things that goes on that when the working people from the department is holding some kind of--they hold, I don't know what that occasion. Once a year they have it. And all the airport department, the transportation department, they award all this. So, that's all secretary of the year or something like that, they have. So, they have party, and you know, give 'em. We give the flower. I remember, they used to buy the lei before.

I have lot of those due from VIP, I just mentioned to you about that. From them, the employees around the airport, like the staff from Shimada office or Owen Miyamoto office, the secretary, they all come to me. Yeah, they all come to me. Because once they come to me and they say, "We from the airport."

"Okay, come on."

They know they getting a bargain price, so they all come. Some of them, I know by name, but lot of them I don't. They say, "Oh, I'm Carol from Department of Transportation. I need so-and so."

I say, "Okay, come on."

I don't know, I been there so long, I get so friendly with everybody. I just help 'em out. Graduation time, yeah?

IH: And sometimes they give you regular customers like that?

MO: Yeah. Every day. Plenty. That's it?

IH: Okay. Thank you so much.

MO: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

KA PO'E KAU LEI

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